U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Kosovo

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Part 1

On February 17, 2008, Kosovo declared independence, and on February 18, the United States recognized and formally established diplomatic relations with the Republic of Kosovo. In its declaration of independence, Kosovo committed to implementing the plan of United Nations Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari, which called for Kosovo independence subject to a period of international supervision. Ahtisaari also proposed a comprehensive package of measures to safeguard the rights of the country's minority communities. While governing authorities generally respected the rights of citizens, there continued to be problems in some areas, particularly with regard to the rights of minority communities and the ongoing threat of politically and ethnically motivated violence. The justice system is underdeveloped and subject to manipulation. It is marked by lengthy pretrial detention and lack of due process as well as corruption. Societal antipathy against Serbs and the Serbian Orthodox Church still exists and returns of internally displaced persons (IDPs), chiefly Kosovo Serbs, continue at a slow rate, hampered by lack of economic opportunities, property problems, and security fears as well as pressure on Serb IDPs not to return. That pressure comes from elements within the Serbian government, as well as from hardliners within the Kosovo Serb community. Other problems include government corruption; violence and discrimination against women; trafficking in persons, particularly girls and women for sexual exploitation; societal discrimination against persons with disabilities; abuse and discrimination against homosexuals; and child labor in the informal sector.

Part 2

In consultation with Kosovo's central government, municipalities, NGOs, and other international organizations and bilateral partners, the U.S. government developed plans to assist Kosovo's developing government structures to function transparently and democratically and to integrate minority communities in their work. This will be accomplished by engaging with political parties, the assembly, and civil society across ethnic lines to help citizens understand their roles in a modern polity and the responsibilities of the majority towards the minority; decentralizing the government in accordance with the provisions of the Ahtisaari Plan; and empowering municipal governments. U.S. government assistance is being provided to establish legal and legislative frameworks for minority protection and communities, immigration, and asylum. U.S. government programs and personnel provide infrastructure assistance and practical advice to municipalities, with a focus on minority communities, provide assistance to minority communities in the areas of returns and relocations, and assist in ensuring that minority communities have access to information in their own languages. A comprehensive strategy to improve rule of law will complement new government structures with the same mandate to protect minority rights. U.S. programs will assist the country to improve overall professionalism and efficacy in its judicial system and police services; and with NATO, assist in developing a Kosovo Security Force as outlined in the Ahtisaari plan.

Part 3

U.S. programs to build democratic institutions in Kosovo are designed and evaluated to promote inclusion and integration of ethnic minorities into mainstream politics and society. For government officials, the United States sponsors training on parliamentary procedures, the roles and responsibilities of parliamentarians in a multiethnic parliament, executive oversight, and constituent relations. As a result of this assistance, opposition party caucuses have taken an active role in coordinating party initiatives, members of parliament participate in question and answer sessions regarding promulgated legislation, and a women's caucus has been established. The Party Training Academy, a U.S. program, is designed to provide political parties with trained individuals who are prepared to act as party staff and/or party organizers at all levels of a political organization. At the municipal level, U.S. programs empower local governments through facilitating the establishment of a legal and regulatory framework and legislation on decentralization and local governance; provide training on laws and regulations pertaining to municipalities for all elected and appointed officials; facilitate arrangements for support to new municipalities from established municipalities; and support the transfer of budget funds, budgetary authority, and other competencies to the municipal level. The United States also funds programs to build the capacity of new Serb-majority municipalities through targeted assistance and infrastructure support. To establish these Serb-majority municipalities, U.S. personnel work with other international civilian organizations to establish, advise, and mentor on good practices and effective administration of government. U.S. programs increase citizen participation in political decision-making by assisting NGOs and promoting direct community engagement. Active diplomatic engagement with the government, in conjunction with other international organizations, increases and facilitates Serb and other minority representation in the country's civil service, judiciary, central government, and elected bodies.

The Ahtisaari plan calls for comprehensive support and protections for minority communities to address problems of social discrimination against Serbs and other minority communities. The United States supports Kosovo's commitment to implement the Ahtisaari principles through minority-focused programs promoting tolerance, unity, and community. In the U.S. government-funded Access English Program, English Language Fellows from the United States conduct English classes for ethnically mixed groups of teenagers in Pristina and Prizren. Additionally, an after-school pilot program provides English-language classes in ethnic Albanian and Serb high schools. Every summer the U.S. sponsors students from various ethnic backgrounds to attend an English language camp together. The U.S. government also funds several scholarships to the American University of Kosovo for minority students. Other U.S. programs support minority and majority community civil society organizations to address issues of concern to their communities, including: freedom of movement; religious freedom; local government cooperation; and free and objective media reporting and cultural exchange through infrastructure projects. The Municipal Integration and Support Initiative focuses on returns and reintegration of minorities. This U.S. program works with municipal officials to develop action plans that identify key local obstacles to return and reintegration and the actions needed to address these obstacles. Projects ranging from school renovations to community centers to road construction address these concerns. Their intent is to improve conditions for the return of minorities and quality of life, and to help develop awareness on transparency and participatory methods at the community level. Working directly with returnees, another U.S. government program focuses on reconstruction of damaged property; hosting "go and see" visits that assist potential returnees in deciding whether or not to return; facilitating dialogue with receiving communities; funding income and self-reliance projects; and stabilizing the receiving community. U.S. programs also focus on nurturing Serb and minority media with financial backing and business expertise to ensure that all communities have access to local media and coverage in their own languages.

U.S. programs focused on developing, advising, and educating the judiciary, prosecutorial, and legal services within the legal sector are designed to assist the government to establish democratic values as it builds capacity. These efforts help address issues of ethnically motivated violence and problems with judicial due process and corruption. Advising, mentoring, vetting, and training are provided by U.S. assistance to the Kosovo Judicial Council, established in 2007 to govern courts and oversee judges and prosecutors. In conjunction with European multilateral institutions and the Kosovo government, the United States is helping establish administrative and management practices to support an effective and professional prosecutor function. Current U.S. programs also provide professional development training courses for prosecutors on topics such as pretrial proceedings, evidence, trial advocacy, and efficient administrative functioning. A U.S. program supports the Special Prosecutor's Office to conduct complex investigations and prosecutions falling under its jurisdiction and provides training on the law and courtroom practices. A U.S. law firm, supported by the U.S. government, provides *pro bono* advice and mentorship to the judicial sector, including training lawyers and future jurists. Additionally, the Legal Profession Development Initiative is a three-year, U.S.-sponsored activity to increase the professionalism of the legal community through assisting law schools to develop classes in ethics, legal clinical, and legal methodology at the Pristina and Mitrovica Law Faculties; developing a Bar that regulates the practice of law to ensure competency and ethical standards; and strengthening the ability of the Kosovo Chamber of Advocates to support and provide continuing legal education.

Part 4

Development of the rule of law is supported by U.S. programs that strengthen local security forces through mentorship and technical support and help develop the legal

framework in this area. One U.S. program focuses on increasing the professionalism of the Kosovo Police Service through strengthening the police and prosecutor relationship and improving investigative methods to combat organized crime, trafficking in persons, and financial crime through technical assistance and mentorship. U.S. funds provide for the continued presence of U.S. officers in the UN Interim Administrative Mission in Kosovo's international civilian police and will also fund U.S. police participation in a follow-on European Union Rule of Law Mission known as EULEX. These officers bolster internal security and work to strengthen the capacity of the local police through mentoring and provision of equipment and training. These efforts, particularly in minority areas, help build the credibility of local police. The United States, which will work in tandem with EULEX, assists the government to gain greater control of its borders by developing relevant institutions and a legal framework for immigration and asylum; professionalizing the border service; and providing expertise on developing relevant immigration laws, policies, and procedures.

To promote protection of women and minorities and development of good governance, U.S. programs support the government's efforts to develop its own capacity to reduce trafficking in persons. To improve long-term reintegration services, U.S. programs support existing shelters to establish or expand residential reintegration facilities, promote prevention activities, establish a package of social services as a mechanism to reduce the long term vulnerability of high-risk populations, and coordinate and standardize these programs between shelters. Additionally, the United States supports a trained coordinator to pilot social networks between community-based stakeholders including social workers, community leaders, teachers, and youth peers with the goal of supporting awareness-raising activities among target groups on topics directly and indirectly related to trafficking. Training and organizing community members to serve as antitrafficking watchdog groups and supporting increased communication between youth and local authorities/service providers is also provided. The ultimate goal of these programs is to reduce the number of trafficking victims in Kosovo.

Establishing a professional and independent media, particularly outlets that serve minority communities, is an integral part of the U.S. government's democracy building efforts. To this end, U.S. programs sponsor training of media professionals in the United States and workshops at the Kosovo Institute of Journalism and Communications, focusing journalists on covering the issues particularly critical for a newly forming country. In addition, one of the U.S.-sponsored English Language Fellows teaches American standards of journalism using U.S. training materials at the Kosovo Institute of Journalism and Communications. Targeted assistance will ensure that information in the Serbian language is available to minority communities.

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